

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CELEBRATING 100 YEARS 1916-2016



snapshot Essex National Heritage Area

TRIP MASON





LEFT: FULL SAILS AT SEA; ROD PARKER; RIGHT: JOHN TLUMACKI/BOSTON GLOBE

region reborn

ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA FOSTERS COLLABORATION

\$20 million
IN LOCAL MATCH
MONIES SEEDED BY
\$9 MILLION IN
FEDERAL FUNDS
OVER A 12-YEAR
PERIOD

**Match
Sources:**
BUSINESSES
DONATIONS
GRANTS

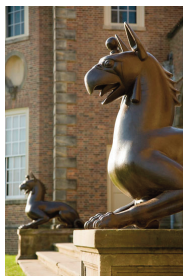
Benefits:
PROTECTS HERITAGE
BOOSTS ECONOMIES
HELPS COMMUNITIES

Essex National Heritage Area, just north of Boston, is at the forefront of New England's surge as a tourist destination. With modest federal investment, the area cultivates regional identity, brings communities together, and educates resident and visitor alike. Newburyport, a prime stop along the new Essex Coastal Scenic Byway, was a harbinger for how national heritage areas are transforming America. Its heyday was in the age of sail, when New England ruled as a global maritime power. But as the city's fortunes faded—its waterfront rife with weeds and



junk—a plan was floated to bulldoze much of downtown in favor of strip malls and parking. Instead, residents held fast to their heritage. Today, block after block of beautifully restored buildings, once boarded up and derelict, greet travelers who venture off Route 1 and onto High Street. The sense of possibility—epitomized by a waterfront boardwalk and a downtown alive with shoppers and strollers—draws new residents, too. National heritage areas are at the core of similar stories across the country, generating \$13 billion annually and supporting nearly 150,000 jobs. Local pride, which survives economic downturns, provides the seed.

Left, above: The tall ship replica Friendship of Salem at Salem Maritime National Historic Site, which with Essex National Heritage Area has been a key to the revival. Volunteers, mostly retirees with woodworking skills, lent a hand to the 11-year construction of the replica, whose 17 sails cover nearly a quarter acre, operated by 50 miles of lines. The volunteers, along with young interns from Salem Maritime, act as crew for Essex Heritage-sponsored Friendship Sails! events, bringing history alive for thousands of families in New York City, Boston, and ports throughout New England.



Visitors have long been drawn to Boston's North Shore, writes Essex Heritage director Annie Harris in the new *Essex Coastal Byway Guide*. "Their interactions with the land and the sea—the natural elements that define this distinctive region—form a narrative that is distinctly local and nationally significant." Water is a way of life, the rock-bound coast carved with coves, capes, points, necks, and bays.

Gloucester, where fishermen still set sail to match wits with the Atlantic, draws artists inspired by the sea-lashed granite, gracefully looped nets, and rust-streaked trawlers. The mill towns of the Merrimack River, remnants of the Industrial Revolution, are destinations with their own distinctive patina. The two national parks at the revival's core—Salem Maritime National Historic Site and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, both magnets for visitors—celebrate these stories.

In a place that takes pride in provincialism, Essex Heritage promotes and facilitates regional collaboration. "Essex, just by being there—and providing the glue among the communities and the reasons and the themes that connect us all—keeps us from fracturing our efforts," says an interviewee in the recent congressionally mandated evaluation of the area. Thanks to Essex, those efforts are anchored with funds communities can count on. This is especially good news for small museums and historic societies, which tend to be vulnerable to shortfalls. Over a 12-year period, the evaluation reports, Essex Heritage more than doubled its federal investment. When combined with the match grown from the federal seed, this adds up to nearly \$30 million invested in local economies.

Given its connections to community leaders, Essex is often able to tap financial and other resources that others cannot. The product is hope as well as economic benefit. The ranks of volunteers swell with residents who work for other conservation agencies. The success in creat-

Right: The soaring addition to Salem's Peabody Essex Museum expresses the renewed vitality fostered by Essex Heritage. The museum dates to 1799, during Salem's heyday as one of sailing's richest cities, filled with treasures like the only complete Qing Dynasty House outside China. **Above:** Essex promotes the array of architectural riches, like Cogswell's Grant (above left), a colonial-era farmhouse now a gallery of "country arts"—painted furniture, redware, hooked rugs, weathervanes—and Castle Hill (above right), a 59-room Stuart-Style mansion at the center of an estate transformed into a wildlife refuge and beach.

100%
OF COMMUNITIES
GET GRANTS TO AID
REVITALIZATION

381
GRANTS AWARDED

\$21 million
IN LOCAL
INVESTMENT SEEDED
BY \$2 MILLION
IN PARTNERSHIP
GRANTS



FAR LEFT COGSWELL'S GRANT, NEAR LEFT CASTLE HILL, RIGHT PEABODY ESSEX MUSEUM



Essex National Heritage Area:

CONSERVES ENDANGERED SITES

funding preservation master plans for places like the 1633 First Parish Burial Ground in Gloucester.

SAVES HISTORY BEFORE IT'S LOST

funding initiatives like publishing the recollections of Salem seniors.

ENGAGES CHILDREN

funding after-school programs like "My City/Myself," which connect students to communities.

PROMOTES HEALTH

funding trails like the Topsfield Linear Common, linking the village center with neighborhoods, schools, and parks.

Coalitions:

BORDER TO BOSTON TRAIL COALITION

Advocates, municipal officials, and planners working to develop a 28-mile biking and walking trail linking 8 towns from the New Hampshire border to Danvers.

GREAT MARSH COALITION

Groups dedicated to preserving the Great Marsh, one of New England's signature places with over 20,000 acres of beach, waterways, parks, and wildlife refuges.

COASTAL TRAILS COALITION

Nonprofit promoting the development of a 30-mile system of biking and pedestrian trails linking the lower Merrimack Valley.

ESSEX COASTAL SCENIC BYWAY

Initiative to preserve and promote an 85-mile scenic route traversing 13 coastal communities.

ing trail coalitions—where Essex Heritage pairs its expertise with the contributions of stakeholders—is epitomized by the popularity of the event Trails & Sails: Two Weekends of Walks and Water. Trails express the regional identity that glues it all together. Trail signage, reports the evaluation, appears to go a long way in unifying the area. Essex takes its message to schools too, developing curricula and sponsoring youth jobs at Salem Maritime National Historic Site and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site. Over six weeks, Dominican American students met at The House of Seven Gables to learn, in Spanish, about the untold stories connecting their Caribbean homeland with Salem's historic sites.

Given this success, the National Park Service recommends continuing its role with Essex Heritage. This could include providing financial and technical assistance; coordinating training; providing operational guidance; partnering with national parks for events; and consulting on preservation and conservation plans and projects. No other organization has the mission to preserve all of the region's nationally significant places; without Essex, says the evaluation, collaboration between the area's 34 towns and cities would dramatically decrease. Losing federal assistance would be "dire," the evaluation concludes: "In the absence of financial and technical assistance, these groups would face a sudden deterioration in capacity with some having to close their doors."

Below: First Bloom event at Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site. Left: Newburyport basks in revitalized glory, an image from last year's photo safari, a seminar co-sponsored by Hunt's Photo and Video, one of the ways Essex generates income while inviting people to interact with the attractions.





ABOVE ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA, BELOW JASYSON MITCHELL

Above and right:

“Set against a backdrop of rocky shorelines and New England’s largest salt marsh [are] mile after mile of breathtaking vistas, working harbors, quaint villages, world class art and culture, and distinctive local food, shops, and lodging,” writes Essex Heritage director Annie Harris in the foreword to the new Essex Coastal Byway Guide by Joel Brown. Water remains a way of life in what was Boston’s gold coast of the early 1800s, when New England ruled the waves.

Cover: *The tall ship replica Friendship of Salem at Derby Wharf, Salem Maritime National Historic Site.*

